

1 WE CLAIM:

2 1. A method of storing photographs comprising:
3 providing a data repository on a network accessible to a plurality of users who
4 have digital photographs, wherein the digital photographs are comprised of data files in a
5 suitable format;
6 receiving digital photographs from the users over the network;
7 storing the digital photographs in the data repository;
8 when storing each digital photograph in the data repository, associating each
9 digital photograph with data that indicate a physical location;
10 providing a search function available to the users over the network that enables
11 users to search by physical location for digital photographs stored by other users;
12 allowing users to select digital photographs stored by other users; and
13 transmitting copies of the selected digital photographs to the users who selected
14 them over the network.

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16 2. The method of Claim 1 further comprising:
17 for some of the digital photographs stored in the data repository, associating
18 additional data with the digital photograph and storing the additional data in the data
19 repository, wherein the additional data indicates an orientation.

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21 3. The method of Claim 1 further comprising:
22 for some of the digital photographs stored in the data repository, associating
23 additional data with the digital photograph and storing the additional data in the data
24 repository, wherein the additional data restrict which other users may obtain a copy of the
25 digital photograph.

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27 4. The method of Claim 1 further comprising:
28 for some of the digital photographs stored in the data repository, associating
29 additional data with the digital photograph and storing the additional data in the data
30 repository, wherein the additional data indicate an owner of the digital photograph.

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2 5. The method of Claim 1 further comprising:

3 for some of the digital photographs stored in the data repository, associating
4 additional data with the digital photograph and storing the additional data in the data
5 repository, wherein the additional data indicate a date on which the digital photograph
6 was taken.

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8 6. The method of Claim 1 further comprising:

9 for some of the digital photographs stored in the data repository, associating
10 additional data with the digital photograph and storing the additional data in the data
11 repository, wherein the additional data indicate a date on which the digital photograph
12 was deposited in the data repository.

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14 7. The method of Claim 1 further comprising:

15 for some of the digital photographs stored in the data repository, associating
16 additional data with the digital photograph and storing the additional data in the data
17 repository, wherein the additional data provide a description of the digital photograph.

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19 8. The method of Claim 1 further comprising:

20 for some of the digital photographs stored in the data repository, associating
21 additional data with the digital photograph and storing the additional data in the data
22 repository, wherein the additional data include a focal length used for the digital
23 photograph.

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25 9. The method of Claim 1 further comprising:

26 for some of the selected digital photographs transmitted to users, charging the
27 users a fee for the selected digital photographs.

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1 10. The method of Claim 1 further comprising:
2 storing links to web cams in the data repository;
3 when storing each link to a web cam in the data repository, associating each link
4 to a web cam with data that indicate a physical location, wherein the physical location
5 indicates where the web cam associated with the link is located;
6 providing a search function available to the users over the network that enables
7 users to search by physical location for web cam links stored by other users;
8 allowing users to select links to web cams of other users; and
9 transmitting the respective selected web cam links to the users who selected them
10 over the network.

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12 11. The method of Claim 1 wherein the physical location associated with the
13 digital photograph indicates a vantage point of the digital photograph.

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15 12. The method of Claim 1 wherein the physical location associated with the
16 digital photograph indicates the location of an object in the digital photograph.

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18 13. The method of Claim 1 wherein the data that indicate a physical location
19 is obtained, for at least some of the digital photographs, from positioning equipment
20 associated with the camera that took the photograph.

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22 14. The method of Claim 1 wherein the data that indicate a physical location
23 is obtained from the user from whom the associated digital photograph was received.

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25 15. The method of Claim 1 further comprising:
26 when receiving digital photographs from users, requesting each user to indicate
27 the physical location to be associated with the digital photograph.

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1 16. The method of Claim 1 further comprising:
2 making the data repository accessible to a map developer; and
3 allowing the map developer to update maps using the digital photographs stored
4 in the data repository.

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6 17. The method of Claim 1 further comprising:
7 for some of the copies of selected digital photographs transmitted to users over
8 the network, providing the users with route guidance for traveling to the respective
9 locations shown in the digital photographs.

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11 18. The method of Claim 1 further comprising:
12 for some of the digital photographs received from users, allowing the users to
13 associate a plurality of digital photographs as a related group.

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15 19. The method of Claim 1 wherein the search function allows a user to
16 specify a physical location by distance from a reference point.

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18 20. The method of Claim 1 wherein the search function allows a user to
19 specify a physical location by a bounding area.

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21 21. The method of Claim 1 further comprising:
22 establishing groups of users, wherein each group comprises a subset of all users;
23 and
24 restricting exchange of digital photographs stored in the data repository by
25 members of a group to only members of the group.

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27 22. The method of Claim 1 wherein the search function supports free text
28 searches.

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1 23. The method of Claim 1 wherein the data repository automatically
2 recognizes potential placenames when users enter text to be associated with digital
3 photographs being stored.

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5 24. A method of exchanging photographs comprising:
6 providing an indexing program on a network accessible to a plurality of users,
7 wherein each of the users has digital photographs stored as data files on a respective
8 separate one of a plurality of data storage devices connected to the network, wherein the
9 indexing program associates each digital photograph with a physical location, and
10 wherein the indexing program refers to each digital photograph by referencing the user's
11 data storage device on which the digital photograph is stored;
12 providing a search function available to the users over the network that enables
13 users to search by physical location for digital photographs of other users;
14 allowing users to select digital photographs stored by other users on said other
15 users' data storage devices; and
16 providing for the transmission of copies of the selected digital photographs to
17 those users who selected them over the network.

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19 25. The method of Claim 24 wherein the indexing program includes a client
20 component that forms an individual index of digital photographs stored on an individual
21 user's data storage device, and wherein the individual index is transmitted over the
22 network and integrated with other users' individual indexes to form a master index.

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24 26. A method of storing photographs in a standalone computing system
25 comprising:
26 providing a data repository on the standalone computing system;
27 storing digital photographs in the data repository;
28 when storing each digital photograph in the data repository, associating each
29 digital photograph with data that indicate a physical location;

1 providing a search function available to the user of the standalone computing
2 system that enables the user to search by physical location for digital photographs stored
3 in the data repository;
4 allowing the user to select digital photographs stored in the data repository; and
5 providing copies of the selected digital photographs to the user from the
6 standalone computing system.

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8 27. A method of storing photographs in computing systems connected to a
9 data network, the method comprising:

10 providing a first data repository on first computing system connected to the data
11 network;

12 storing a first plurality of digital photographs in the first data repository;

13 when storing each digital photograph in the first data repository, associating each
14 digital photograph with location reference data that indicate a physical location, wherein
15 the location reference data is in a selected format;

16 providing a second data repository on a second computing system accessible to a
17 plurality of users who have digital photographs, wherein the second computing system is
18 accessible over the data network to the first computing system;

19 storing a second plurality of digital photographs in the second data repository;

20 when storing each digital photograph in the second data repository, associating
21 each digital photograph with location reference data that indicate a physical location,
22 wherein the location reference data associated with the digital photographs stored in the
23 second data repository is in the selected format;

24 providing a search function available to a user of the first computing system that
25 enables the user to search by physical location for digital photographs stored in the first
26 data repository and the second data repository;

27 allowing the user to select digital photographs stored in the first data repository
28 and the second data repository; and

29 providing copies of the selected digital photographs to the user from the first data
30 repository and the second data repository.

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2 28. A method of enabling a user to take photographs of a place of interest
3 comprising:

4 storing data in a computing system to indicate a user-selected subject matter
5 category;

6 determining locations of the user as the user travels through a geographic region;

7 using a geographic database to compare locations of the user to locations of
8 places that match the user-selected subject matter category; and

9 informing the user when the user is in proximity to one place that matches the
10 user-selected subject matter category.

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